

PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

WILMAPCO Conference Room, June 18, 2018

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Bill Dunn, Civic League for New Castle County
Pat Folk, Cecil County
Tom Fruehstorfer, City of Newark
Mario Gangemi, Cecil County Chamber of Commerce
Ken Grant, AAA Mid-Atlantic
Dick Janney, Southern New Castle County
Tom Posatko, Delmarva Rail Passenger Association
Glenn Pusey, Bear Glasgow Council
Barry Shotwell, 7/40 Alliance (Vice Chair)
Vic Singer, Civic League for New Castle County
Javier Torrijos, Delaware Hispanic Commission
Antonio Valenzuela, City of Wilmington (Chair)

Absent:

Mark Blake, GHADA
Robert Cameron, Claymont Renaissance Development Corporation
Dave Carter, Southern New Castle County
Darlene Cole, Elderly and Disabled Transit Advisory Committee
Carlos de los Ramos, AARP
Maria Dziembowska, The Nature Conservancy
John Ford, Cecil Board of Realtors
Bill Lower, Committee of 100
Barbara Mobarak, League of Women Voters
Bill Osborne, Delaware State Chamber of Commerce
Jeff Peters, Pike Creek Valley Civic League
Gail Seitz, City of New Castle
Dave Tancredi, Milltown-Limestone Civic Alliance
Frank Vari, Chesapeake City
Alison Windle, Neighborhood House

Staff Members:

Randi Novakoff, Outreach Manager
Bill Swiatek, Principal Planner
Jake Thompson, Transportation Planner
Tigist Zegeye, Executive Director

Guests:

John Flaherty

Minutes prepared by Janet Butler from recording.

Barry Shotwell, PAC Vice Chair, called the meeting to order.

6:30 PM

Approval of Meeting Minutes

6:32 PM

Mr. Singer made a correction on Page 5. He added “for selected groups” before “would.” The corrected sentence is: “Mr. Singer suggested that free transit during rush hour for selected groups would save money, because it would reduce congestion.”

ACTION: On motion by Mario Gangemi, seconded by Vic Singer the PAC approved the April 16, 2018 meeting minutes with correction.

Motion passed

(6/18/18-01)

2. Public Comment:

6:35 PM

John Flaherty said commuter rail transportation at the border of Marcus Hook was cut off back in 1982 and was re-established in 1989, and now it serves the community well. Mr. Flaherty lives in the City of Wilmington. He said the transit hub was dismantled there. He is not asking PAC to do anything; however he is part of a coalition to re-establish bus service at Rodney Square and the coalition has collected many signatures on a petition.

Mr. Valenzuela agrees that the bus service is chaotic in Wilmington, and it is harder to get around. He added most of the people who were affected are the poor, the disabled, and the elderly. In addition, bus shelters do not have places for people to sit down.

Mr. Posatko asked if a motion by the WILMAPCO Board opposing the dismantling of the bus hub would help. Mr. Valenzuela suggested someone from the Delaware Transit Corporation should attend the next PAC meeting. Ms. Novakoff said John Sisson, DTC Chief Executive Officer and Council Chair, presented during the last PAC meeting. Mr. Flaherty suggested additional information could be presented (by him) at the next PAC meeting that would include e-mails released by the governor’s office featuring facts and figures.

Mr. Dunn asked if WILMAPCO was asked to conduct a transit review. Ms. Zegeye said yes, the Wilmington Transit Moving Forward report analyzed and made recommendations for improvement. WILMAPCO staff has also conducted a Circulation Study, which included a lot of recommendations.

Mr. Singer said Mr. Sisson had mentioned at his presentation at the last PAC meeting that there is a public/private partnership and he hopes that the transfer stations would be put in place by the May 2019 Service Change. Mr. Singer said he would like a follow-up with DTC to find out exactly when and where these transfer stations would be established.

Mr. Janney said he is most concerned about the handicapped people, because they will have to walk farther, and some of them can’t even walk a block. Mr. Singer added there is a consensus that the situation is not acceptable and he asked that it be noted.

3. Executive Director's Report:

6:40 PM

Ms. Zegeye reported that at the WILMAPCO Council meeting on May 3, 2018, the Council adopted the State/Local Cash Commitment for Fiscal Year 2019, adopted the State/Local Funding Formula for Fiscal Year 2019, adopted the FY 2019 UPWP, amended the FY 2018-2021 TIP with increase of funding for Cecil County transit capital and operating assistance, and approved the Proposed Prioritization of FY 2020-2023 TIP submissions. Presentations by staff included an SR 9 Corridor Master Plan Update and the WILMAPCO Public Opinion Survey.

Ms. Zegeye shared the following public outreach information:

- Staff attended the Climate Preparedness Conference in Manchester, New Hampshire.
- Staff attended the Route 40 and 896 Public Workshop plus a number of bike activities.
- The Newark Transit Study kick-off meeting was held on May 31st. Four different transit providers, UD, DTC, Free Unicity, and Elkton's Cecil Transit, serve the area. The purpose of the study is to better plan and coordinate Newark area transit services.
- The New Castle County Bike Plan is being done in-house, and staff is contacting civic groups and municipalities to get their feedback. DeIDOT has just completed a policy plan for the state, and WILMAPCO is creating a project-specific plan for NCC.
- A Wilmington Initiatives (WI) public meeting will be held on June 20, 2018, and staff needs feedback on the following projects: 1) 12th Street Connector Safety and Capacity, 2) Five Point Intersection, and 3) East 7th Street Peninsula projects. PAC is invited to attend and give feedback.
- The Route 9 Master Plan Public Workshop will be held on June 25, 2018.
- Staff is supporting the development of a Climate Resilience Plan for the City of Wilmington and a Sustainability Plan for the City of Newark.
- Staff is participating in Southbridge Weekend Festival.
- The Annual WILMAPCO TAC and AQS Picnic will be held at 11:30 a.m., at Lums Pond State Park, Pavilion #4, in Bear, Delaware, following the joint TAC and AQS meeting on July 19, 2018 at 10:00 a.m..
- A ground-breaking ceremony for construction of a new building was held for The Newark Regional Transportation Center (NRTC) that staff attended.
- The US 202 Master Plan is moving forward after holding an initial meeting.
- Interviews with consultants are being held at WILMAPCO for the Southern New Castle County (SNCC) Master Plan on June 29, 2018.

ACTION ITEMS:

None.

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS:

4. 2050 Regional Transportation Plan

6:50 PM

Mr. Swiatek said the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Update features WILMAPCO's goals, objectives, and actions. The plan is updated every four years, and the 2050 RTP Update is due in March 2019. The second part of the plan is a list of major transportation projects that are constrained or aspirational.

Mr. Gangemi said air quality is a hot topic; however, he suggested we should talk about clean air and clean water instead of climate change and we will reach a broader audience. Mr. Dunn said we should be talking about efforts to improve and reduce the air quality problem. Mr. Singer asked what does “maximize our investments” mean. Mr. Swiatek said using our resources most efficiently and getting the most bang for the buck. Mr. Singer suggested the report specify that.

Mr. Swiatek said the key 2050 RTP Update tasks include: 1) Review the Progress Report and the Public Opinion Survey; develop draft goals, objectives, actions, agency outreach; and develop project lists (May 2018); 2) Scenario planning and air quality conformity, public outreach, and document refinement (August 2018); and 3) Document refinement, public outreach, second phase, and adoption of the document (March 2019).

The 2040 RTP actions were established under the objectives that were rated with a red, yellow, or green light indicator in the 2017 Progress Report. There were 21% red actions (needs more work), 29% yellow actions (needs some work), and 50% green actions (well done).

In the 2050 RTP, staff will focus on accomplishing actions which saw poor progress. One example of a red action was to encourage increased density and future growth in center and core Transportation Investment Areas (TIAs). Staff are reworking the TIAs to help better identify targeted areas for growth. Another area of improvement is to better support high-technology transit and highway projects. Staff are proposing greater support for this with actions including supporting high technology transportation projects, improve transit system performance, and consider a connected and autonomous vehicle future in all WILMAPCO studies. Staff would also support autonomous vehicle preparation and testing, and fund infrastructure to support the use of our regional transportation network by connected and autonomous vehicles.

Additional key draft action changes in the 2050 RTP include strengthening sub-regional plans. Draft policy would require public participation; complete streets; consideration of connected/autonomous vehicles; natural and cultural resource protection; and multimodal connectivity to health and affordable foods, employment, and services in all studies.

An additional draft policy action gives emphasis to using all WILMAPCO project prioritization processes to select projects for funding, including the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) processes.

Performance measures are mostly unchanged from the 2017 Progress Report. However, staff will add all the federal performance measures to the appropriate actions as they come online. In addition, staff will provide technical scores of aspirational projects (project selection measure); target for TIP preservation spending, trail count data, and public transit fares.

Mr. Singer asked if the team had looked at cost recovery. Mr. Swiatek said they had not looked at it yet, but they could investigate it.

The 2050 RTP proposed transportation project lists will include results from agency coordination, new projects from sub-regional plans, and the New Castle County projects that are submitted.

Next steps are to finalize the project list, provide technical scores, and complete public outreach regarding goals, objectives, actions, and performance measures. In addition, staff will complete technical assessments, air quality analyses, and early public outreach to get feedback. Mr. Swiatek thanked PAC for their input for the 2050 RTP.

5. Elkton Pedestrian Plan

7:10 PM

Mr. Thompson said the Elkton Pedestrian Plan was reviewed by a Steering Committee and was released for public comments. Staff will seek endorsement of the plan on July 12, 2018, from the WILMAPCO Council.

Mr. Thompson said Elkton is the Cecil County seat with a population of 15,433 and the town is located along the I-95 and Northeast Corridor rail line. It is a suburban area with an historic walkable downtown. The Steering Committee for the Elkton Pedestrian Plan includes 10 members, with representatives from the Town of Elkton, Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA), and WILMAPCO.

The project includes a GIS inventory of Elkton's pedestrian network, review of previous studies, and sidewalk prioritization analysis, which were completed. Current progress includes new recommendations and prioritization for pedestrian improvements.

Initially, the project team collected the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) data for sidewalks and curb ramps compliance. The team also collected data on curb ramps regarding width, scope, turning space, marked crosswalks, and detectable warning strips, which cannot be blocked by parked vehicles.

Previous studies included the East Coast Greenway Feasibility Study (2003); Elkton Walkable Community Workshop (2008); Elkton Signage Study (2010); Elkton Bicycle Plan (2011); Elkton Transit Oriented Development (2011); Top Pedestrian Priority Segments (2012); and Locust Lane Sidewalk Feasibility Study (2015).

The Pedestrian Prioritization process was based on the top pedestrian priority segments for the WILMAPCO region and was adapted to Elkton's scale. Criteria included the former Elkton Train Station, bus stops, commercial buildings, parks, schools, libraries, greenways, density (population plus employment) Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs), and pedestrian crashes.

Mr. Gangemi asked if Elkton had received a grant for improvements. Ms. Zegeye said yes; however, Elkton did not want the funding that was awarded, because they did not want to go through all of the state/federal processes. Mr. Gangemi asked then why are we wasting time on a pedestrian plan if Elkton does not want the funding. Ms. Zegeye said they do not have the resources or the staff, but there is no reason to turn down their projects.

A public opinion survey was issued to residents online and on paper. Questions included how often residents walk in Elkton, top destinations, opinions on walkability and safety, suggestions for improvement, and included a chance to win a \$25 Visa gift card, which was awarded. Other outreach included 19 surveys completed at the Elkton Acme where

WILMAPCO offered free water ice on a hot day, 10 surveys were completed at a public workshop, and 20 surveys were completed at the Elkton Fall Festival. A mailing of flyers was sent to 150 households, and targeted ads were placed on Facebook. One-hundred-thirty-five total surveys were completed, 49 were completed at outreach events and 36 were completed online.

Survey results included 83% of respondents live in Elkton and are between the ages of 31 and 64. Top destinations included Town Center, Court House, Main Street, Big Elk Mall, Wal Mart, Library, Meadow Park, Acme, and Union Hospital. Twenty-four per cent of residents walk to get around in Elkton. Eighty-one per cent of respondents were concerned about safety. Top reasons why residents do not walk include crime/personal safety, lack of infrastructure, prefer to drive, homeless, distance, and traffic safety.

Infrastructure recommendations proposed by other survey respondents included complete sidewalks and add bike lanes along Bridge Street, add sidewalks or mixed-use paths along Howard Street; add sidewalks or mixed-use paths along Delaware Avenue Bridge; improve pedestrian access to Big Elk Mall, and complete sidewalks or add mixed-use paths along Route 40.

The project team also reached out to the Middle School, where students filled out surveys and had good ideas. Survey results included that 66% were concerned about safety while walking compared to 80% of adults. Suggestions for improvement included adding sidewalks and crosswalks, improving crossings, especially along Route 40, improving access to Meadow Park, Elkton Middle School, and Patriots Glen. In addition suggested improvements included lighting, widening sidewalks, lowering speed limits, and speed bumps.

Next steps for the Elkton Pedestrian Plan are to hold a public workshop, finalize recommendations, and develop a draft report.

6. 2018 Public Opinion Survey

Ms. Novakoff distributed a copy of the Public Opinion Survey Summary of Results. Ms. Novakoff said the Public Opinion Survey (POS) is a telephone survey conducted every four years. It includes landlines and cell phones. Six hundred completed calls were made, New Castle County (400) and Cecil County (200). The survey is 20 minutes. The survey script was recently revised and translated into Spanish.

Residents reported that 88% of transportation needs are met “very or somewhat well.” Forty percent of respondents felt that transportation planning was done well in the region, which is an increase from previous years; 15% were aware of how projects were selected; 10% were aware of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP); and 43% were aware of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

When asked about access to important destinations like grocery stores or the doctor’s office, 20% of respondents in New Castle County always had problems, which is a high percentage because it represents about 11,000 people.

When asked about importance of issues, 77% responded the most important issue is access to public transit for everyone, especially for those who are unable to drive or do not own a car; while preserving open space and farmland was 70%; and improving bus

and train service was 53% overall. However, developing infrastructure to support automated; self-driving vehicles was only 21%.

Regarding priorities for funding, using more technology to improve the transportation system ranked highest (52%), followed by provide more transit, walking, or biking options (39%). There was more interest in Cecil County (48%) than in New Castle County (37%) for providing more transit, walking, or biking options.

Seventy percent of respondents in both counties supported various funding methods to create new fees paid by the public or developers who benefit from transportation improvements, while only 26% of residents favored raising vehicle fuel taxes.

Regarding growth and development, two thirds agree that development and transportation should be concentrated in areas with higher population/employment. However, no respondents believed it was “never appropriate” to mix office and retail with residential; while 80% responded “sometimes appropriate,” and 15% responded “appropriate.”

Seventeen percent of respondents were aware of the Air Quality Partnership (AQP) of Delaware. Seventeen per cent of respondents had also heard of Air Quality Action Days; and one half or more of respondents in 2006, 2010, and 2014 had heard of Ozone Action Days (previous project name), which indicates that perceptions do change when the project name is changed.

Respondents agreed that all public outreach strategies listed were effective, which is consistent with previous surveys. However, 70% were unfamiliar with WILMAPCO; 45% preferred e-mail surveys; 33% preferred the monthly E-newsletter; and 26% preferred the printed newsletter.

Regarding the demographics, the number of Hispanic surveyed matched closely with Census data. There are quotas for race, but no quotas for education, income, and age. In New Castle County, respondents were over-represented who earned bachelor’s degrees or higher; under-represented were those making \$25,000 or less, and slightly over-represented were those who are earning \$100,000. In addition, respondents were over-represented who are 25-44 years old, and slightly over-represented were those who are 55 plus years old. Ms. Novakoff added if we add more demographics to the survey, the sample size goes down.

7. Other Business

7:50 PM

8. Adjournment

8:00 PM